

# WASHINGTON TERRACE

A Developmental History of The Initial Phase of  
the Communtiy.

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ARRIN A. HOLT  
ARCH 522-1  
PETER GOSS  
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It is the early 1940's and World War II is ravaging the European continent. Entire cities are being systematically destroyed by both sides of the conflict. Many German, French and English families are facing a dreary future as their homes are destroyed by the machines of war. But here in the United States, an entire nation is mobilized and thousands of workers are called into the factories to produce the countless planes, tanks, and ships which are needed to fuel the combatants. The numbers of people which are concentrated in the areas surrounding the factories and military bases created the need for immediate temporary housing. As a result, thousands if not millions of new dwellings evolved into new communities seemingly overnight. Washington Terrace was one such community.

Due to the rapidly expanding civilian work force of Hill Field, the Federal Works Agency provided financing for 1,400 temporary two bedroom houses located four miles from downtown Ogden city. Construction began on the Washington Terrace Housing Project in mid 1942 and progressed until the final house was completed on January 5, 1943. Each of the homes were owned by the federal government and rented to the occupants. The project encompassed 250 acres and cost approximately \$8 million.<sup>1</sup> The project plan included a community center and park space to give the community identity. Despite the drab buildings and dusty, unpaved roads, the residents were very proud of the little community.

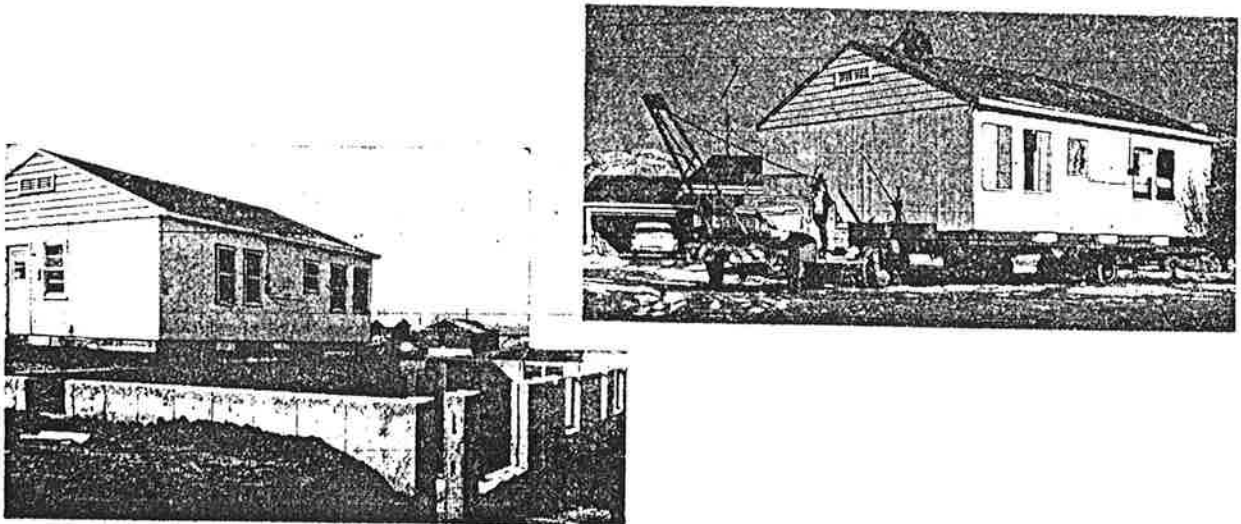
By 1947 the war was over and the nation decided that the federal government should not be in the housing business, so the community was put up for sale. The residents, concerned about the future of their homes, banded together and presented the government with a plan to purchase the entire community. The Washington Terrace Non-Profit Housing Corporation was created on May 5, 1947, and was granted a charter to conduct business in Utah on May 23, 1947.<sup>2</sup> Each of the residents were allowed to join the Housing Corp. for a fee of \$20.

After several years of negotiations, a purchase agreement between the federal government and the Housing Corp. was finally reached on September 1, 1950. The agreement called for the transfer of ownership of the houses, land and public buildings to the Housing Corp. for \$2,250,000 with a 10% down payment of \$225,000. The terms of the agreement allowed for a 25 year loan period, but the loan was repaid in eight years.<sup>3</sup> Ninety five additional acres were acquired so that each house would have an equal sized lot. The first right of purchase went to existing occupants, and then to veterans of World War II, with no person being allowed to purchase more than one home to reduce outside speculation.

The Housing Corp. made plans to have all 1327 houses moved from their "temporary" wartime locations to their present locations (sixty-nine home owners moved their houses out of the project and forty others were purchased by the Housing

Corp. to be used as rentals). Each house was to be picked up from its original location and moved to a concrete foundation (which nearly doubled the available square footage of each house), and remodeled while the residents lived with family or in Corp. owned rental units. The Housing Corp. hired the architectural firm of Five Associates Architects to create plans for remodeling. The firm created 11 floor plans with 22 different elevations, and established an office in the administration building to advise the residents on the manner in which their home could be remodeled.<sup>4</sup> All *-orig sockell of info.?* work was to be completed in accordance with FHA requirements and the Weber County building code. The Public Housing Administration also stipulated that the area be developed as a whole and that the Housing Corp. find a contractor which would agree to do all the work for a set price.<sup>5</sup>

Figure 1: Houses on the move.



Funding problems and contract negotiations delayed any house movement until

June 1956.<sup>6</sup> The Corp. entered into two kinds of contracts, one for the moving of the occupants belongings from their house to a rental unit and back after completion of the remodeling, and one for the movement and remodeling of the house. Once work got into full swing, the contractors were completing the houses at a rate of two per day. The endeavor progressed very smoothly and on July 19, 1957 the "Half-Way House", number 664, was completed.<sup>7</sup> The final home was completed on August 20, 1958.

Figure 2: Washington Terrace in 1958.



Despite having entered into a 25 year contract, the last payment to FHA was made on March 29, 1958, and the project was completed debt free eight years after it was begun.<sup>8</sup> An additional 199 new homes were built adjacent to the original 250 acres and were also completed by August 20, 1958.<sup>9</sup> A celebration was held on August

23, 1958 and in attendance was Senator Arthur v. Watkins, Representative Henry A. Dixon, Henry P. Kipp, director of FHA in Utah, M. Justin Herman, regional director of the Housing and Home Finance Agency, and Carter McFarland , assistant administrator of the Housing and Home Finance Agency, Washington D.C.<sup>10</sup> Not content as a suburb of Ogden, the project became a city on November 4, 1958 by an overwhelming 10:1 ratio of residents favoring incorporation.<sup>11</sup>

The physical boundaries of the development were 4300 S. Street on the north, Washington Boulevard (400 E.) on the East, 4800 S. Street on the south, and 500 W. Street on the West. The project has experienced constant growth to the south during the decades since 1960, and through seven additional building phases the city now extends to 5700 S. Street. The total physical size of the development has increased by a factor of five.

The Washington Terrace Non-Profit Housing Corporation did not create or enforce any specific covenants or deed restrictions, save any stipulated by the FHA, mostly due to the fact that the houses were already existing and were almost exactly alike. The 199 new houses which were built during the initial phase of the project were constructed of the same plans available for the remodeling of existing homes. Homes built after the initial phase were only required to be sympathetic to the original designs so as to perpetuate the air of community.

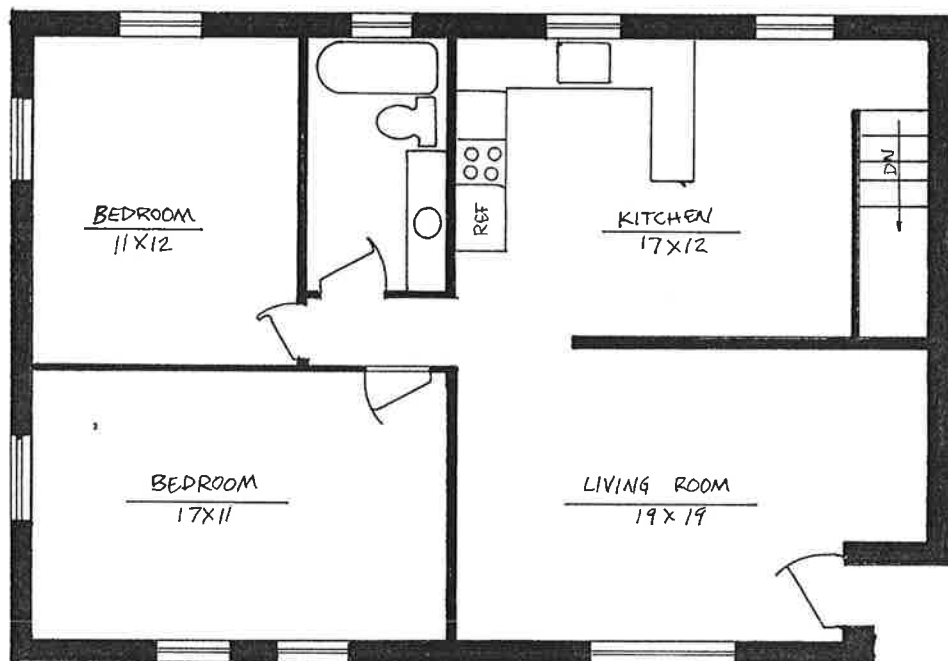
The street layout in the city is a mixture of a north-south, east-west gridiron and a curvilinear arrangement. The streets were illuminated by lights placed on telephone poles near street intersections. The result is a city that has roadway variety but is still easy to find your way around in. Each of the streets was paved and had gutters. The city also had an effective sewer system capable of handling twice the original population<sup>12</sup>. By 1960 a complete storm drain had been installed and was fully functioning. The city originally planned to use water from Pineview Reservoir, have it treated by a facility on site, and then distribute it to each house. The operating costs of the plant and the necessary hook-up costs proved to be too expensive and two wells were dug for culinary water. Secondary water was and is still drawn from Pineview Reservoir<sup>13</sup>.

Like most successful suburban projects, Washington Terrace incorporated a number of parks and public green spaces into the master plan. In 1958 there were seven parks in addition to the school playground. Three of these parks were located adjacent to the Community Administration, Recreation, and Fire Station buildings. The development even had a small area devoted entirely to commercial activity. There was a doctor's office, dentist's office, barber shop, post office, a bank and small shopping center within the small triangle.

Due to the fact that the majority of the existing houses were built as part of

wartime housing, most of the houses look alike. They are all a nondescript rectangle with a gabled roof, the ridge running parallel to the street, and a driveway or carport on the gable end. It is not too difficult to see the original standardized form in many of the houses. Through the years most of the houses have either built a one car garage or created a carport by covering their driveway with a wide assortment of materials, including the ever popular aluminum siding. A few of the houses retain their original shiplath siding, but most were covered with a brick veneer at the time of initial remodeling. Many of the houses have also undergone a wide range of individualistic treatments, as shown in the photographs.

Figure 3: Typical Floor Plan.



The basic plan of the typical original house had less than 1000 square feet and



was composed of an entry/living room, kitchen/dining room, bath and two bedrooms on the upper floor (see Fig. 3). The basement was usually finished into a family room, laundry and third bedroom. As the development grew to the south, the houses which were built began to reflect the popular building styles of their respective periods. The house I grew up in was a mid-seventies split entry with a breezeway and two car garage. There were no apartment complexes during the initial phase, but they have been built in concentrated areas immediately south of the original boundary (4800 S.).

Because it started as a wartime housing project, the early residents of Washington Terrace were primarily of the same age and, having the same employer, the same economic background. Many of the men were World War II veterans. During and shortly after the war years it was apparent that many of the residents were concerned about the "unwholesome influence of some of the migrant tenant families that were here for short periods."<sup>14</sup> This caused the Housing Corp. to adopt standards for the screening of potential homeowners. The screening process considered "... moral character, their standing as citizens, their financial ability, and their credit rating. With this precaution a greatly improved citizenry resulted."<sup>15</sup> Through these standards the Housing Corp. participated in the common practice of discriminating against anyone of other than white heritage. This practiced, while not entirely ceasing, has become much less common and Washington Terrace, while still predominantly white has become the home for many racial and ethnic groups.

The project was recognized in Look Magazine as an "All- American City" and became the nation's first successful Urban Renewal Project.<sup>16</sup> Born of wartime necessity, Washington Terrace outlived it's intended temporary life span and became a model of what a concerned and dedicated group of residents can do to create a more comfortable place to live.

## ENDNOTES

1. The Ogden Standard Examiner, Special Section, August 20, 1958, Pg. 13.
2. Weber County School District, Teaching Guide to Third Grade Social Studies, 1965, Pg.335.
3. The Ogden Standard Examiner, Special Section, August 20, 1958, Pg. 11.
4. Weber County School District, Pg. 336.
5. Ibid.
6. The Ogden Standard Examiner, Special Section, August 20, 1958, Pg. 16.
7. The Ogden Standard Examiner, July 20, 1957, Pg. 10.
8. The Ogden Standard Examiner, Special Section, August 20, 1958, Pg. 16.
9. Ibid. Pg. 10.
10. Ibid. Pg. 2.
11. The Ogden Standard Examiner, November 5, 1958, Pg. B1.
12. The Ogden Standard Examiner, Special Section, August 28, 1958, Pg. 6.
13. Weber County Schools, Pg. 335 & 336.
14. Ibid. Pg. 334.
15. Ibid. Pg. 335.
16. The Ogden Standard Examiner, Special Section, August 20, 1958, Pg. 13.

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The Ogden Standard Examiner, October 10, 1943.

The Ogden Standard Examiner, November 5, 1958.

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